

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-11 /079 W

----- 060469

P R 180450Z MAR 76

FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5318

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 0467

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1, 2

TAGS: PINR CB

SUBJECT: REPORTS BY DIPLOMATIC OBSERVERS: CAMBODIAN LEADERSHIP

REF: (A) STATE 50159, (B) PEKING 399, (C) PEKING 400

1. EGYPTIAN DCM TEWFIK AND TUNISIAN DCM BOUHLILA WHO VISITED CAMBODIA FEBRUARY 20 TO MARCH 5 AND ROMANIAN COUNSELOR LEFTER WHO VISITED IN LATE JANUARY AND EARLY FEBRUARY MADE THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS TO US ON CURRENT CAMBODIAN LEADERS. THEY HAD NO INFORMATION ON PERSONS NOT LISTED HERE.

2. SIHANOUK: LEFTER HAD A THREE HOUR PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH SIHANOUK. HE DESCRIBED THE PRINCE AS BEING VERY SAD AND FEELING THAT HE HAD BEEN DEALT A DOUBLE BLOW, FIRST BY THE LON NOL COUP AND SECOND BY THE KHMER ROUGE. SIHANOUK HAS LOST WEIGHT AND, ACCORDING TO LEFTER, IS DESPONDENT AND FEARS FOR HIS LIFE. TEWFIK, WHO HAS SEEN SIHANOUK OFF AND ON SINCE 1958, ALSO COMMENTED THAT HE HAD LOST WEIGHT BUT DESCRIBED HIM AS LOOKING "GOOD". TEWFIK SAID HE SEEMED
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WELL-ADJUSTED AND WOULD STAY ON IN CAMBODIA AS A HEAD

OF STATE WHO HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE DAY-TO-DAY BUSINESS OF GOVERNMENT. SIHANOUK LIVES IN THE PALACE WITH MONIQUE, WHOSE HAIR WAS RECENTTLY CUT, FORCING HER TO WEAR A WIG. NONE OF THE DIPLOMATS THOUGHT HE CURRENTLY ENJOYED MUCH POWER OR INFLUENCE. LEFTER BELIEVES HE OWED WHAT INFLUENCE HE HAS TO CHINA. PENN NOUTH: PENN NOUTH ALSO MET WITH THE VISITORS. HE SEEMS TO HAVE CHANGED VERY LITTLE BUT OBVIOUSLY HAS NO POWER. HE LIVES WITH HIS WIFE IN ANOTHER PART OF THE CITY.

KHIEU SAMPHAN: BOTH LEFTER AND TEWFIK COMMENTED THAT KHIEU SAMPHAN IS VERY BUSY AND APPEARS TO BE ACTIVE IN ALL FIELDS HOLDING THINGS TOGETHER. TEWFIK DESCRIBED HIM AS LOOKING TIRED. BOUHLILA HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT HE WAS SOMETHING OF A SILENT POWER BEHIND THE SCENES WHO USED IENG SARY TO CARRY OUT MANY PRESSING TASKS IN ADDITION TO HANDLING THE FOREIGNERS.

IENG SARY: ALL OF THE DIPLOMATS SAW A GREAT DEAL OF IENG SARY. HE WAS CLEARLY IN CHARGE OF AT LEAST CAMBODIA'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS. LEFTER COMMENTED THAT HE THOUGHT IENG SARY MORE "NATIONALIST" (AS WELL AS MORE ANTI-FOREIGN) THAN KHIEU SAMPHAN, AND BOUHLILA DESCRIBED HIM AS THE EPITOME OF THE ULTRA-NATIONALISTIC CAMBODIAN WHO COULD NOT BE LABELLED AS PRO- ANY FOREIGN COUNTRY.

TOCH KHAM DOEN: THE FORMER CAMBODIAN AMBASSADOR TO PEKING TOCH KHAM DOEN HAS RETURNED HOME TO PHNOM PENH. HE SERVED AS AN INTERPRETER FOR THE DIPLOMATS WHO VISITED THERE IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH, BUT TOLD THEM HE WOULD RETURN TO THE FIELDS TO GROW RICE AFTER THEY LEFT. THERE WAS NO PLACE FOR HIM TO WORK IN THE FOREIGN NUNISTRY.

NGO PIN: THE NUMBER TWO MAN IN THE CAMBODIAN EMBASSY IN PEKING, NGO PIN, WILL RETURN TO CAMBODIA IN ABOUT TWO WEEKS TO "GROW RICE." HE IS NOW SERVING AS AN INTERPRETER FOR THE NEW CHARGE.

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PICH CHEANG: THE NEW CHARGE D'AFFAIRES IN PEKING, PICH CHEANG, WAS FORMERLY (ACCORDING TO LEFTER) SECRETARY-GENERDL OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN PHNOM PENH. HE SPEAKS GOOD FRENCH AND USED FRENCH WHEN TALKING TO LEFTER IN PHNOM PENH, BUT IN PEKING HE USES AN INTERPRETER. LEFTER HAS HEARD PICH CHEANG WILL BE PROMOGTED TO CAMBODIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE PRC. BOUHLILA HAD THE IMPRESSION PICH CHEANG WAS A MILITARY MAN.

OTHER CAMBODIAN LEADERS: THE DIPLOMATS WHO MOST RECENTLY RETURNED MET ONLY BRIEFLY WITH OTHER CAMBODIAN LEADERS LISTED AS PRESENT BY PHNOM PENH RADIO. THE MET SON SEN BUT DID NOT HAVE A CHANCE TO TALK WITH HIM. BOUHLILA SAID HE TALKED FOR A FEW MINUTES WITH OLD SIHANOUK CRONIES "YOURAN, PRASITH, AND THIOUNN" (POSSIBLE CHAN YOURAN, THIOUNN PRASITH, AND THIOUNN MOM) WHO DESCRIBED THEMSELVES AS MINISTERS WITHOUT PORTFOLIO "OR SALARIES".

FORMER KHMER REPUBLIC OFFICIALS: TEWFIK WAS TOLD LONG BORET HAD BEEN DECAPITATED, AND THAT KIM TITH, NORODOM MONISSARA AND YEM SAMBAUR WERE "TRAITORS" AND THAT THE LAST HAD FLED. AFTER GETTING FOUR NEGATIVE ANSWERS ABOUT OLD FRIENDS, HE DECIDED TO ASK NO MORE. THAYER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL, INFORMATION CONTROL, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 MAR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: BoyleJA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976PEKING00467
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760102-0155
From: PEKING
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760346/aaaaboqe.tel
Line Count: 132
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 50159, 76 PEKING 399, 76 PEKING 400
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: BoyleJA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 APR 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <17 AUG 2004 by BoyleJA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REPORTS BY DIPLOMATIC OBSERVERS: CAMBODIAN LEADERSHIP
TAGS: PINR, PGOV, CB, TS, EG, RO, (KHIEU SAMPHAN), (SIHANOUK, NORODOM), (NGO PIN), (IENG SARY), (TOCH KHAM DOEN), (PICH CHEANG)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006